



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**MANAGER'S REPORT**

DATE ISSUED: January 7, 2005 REPORT NO. 05-010

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee  
Agenda of January 12, 2005

SUBJECT: San Diego Fire-Rescue Overview

REFERENCE: Comprehensive Public Safety Needs Assessment, Manager's  
Report 04-057, dated March 12, 2004  
Public Safety Funding Plan, Manager's Report 04-101, dated  
May 7, 2004  
Fire Stations 12 and 31 – Awarding Construction Contracts,  
Manager's Report 04-063, dated March 24, 2004

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE  
PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

The following report is an overview of the significant issues currently facing the  
San Diego Fire-Rescue Department. More detailed reports will be provided as requested  
by the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee.

DISCUSSION

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Following the Cedar Fire, a five year in-depth Needs Assessment was conducted by the  
San Diego Fire-Rescue Department. Fire-Rescue's estimated funding needs, including  
those associated with Lifeguard Services, totaled \$159 million over the five year period.

A commitment was made by Council to begin to address the public safety needs within the context of the City's other major financial needs and current fiscal circumstances. In FY 2005, \$12 Million of the \$47 Million requested in the first year of the Needs Assessment has been addressed through donations, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) funds and General Fund dollars. This effort has helped to replace open cab brush engines, service aerial ladder trucks, and used for the purchase of critical outlay items such as radios, hose, fire tents, medical equipment, etc., to meet the day-to-day operations of the department. Fire-Rescue's ready reserve fleet of engines is now at fourteen (14), with eleven (11) of those fully outfitted. Unfortunately, the majority of the funds made available were one-time funding sources that will not be available to the Department in FY 2006, reducing the entire department's available outlay funds to \$700,000. This will be further discussed in the upcoming budget process.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT**

The Public Safety Communications Project is currently the most critical issue facing all of the public safety services in the City of San Diego. The City's four major public safety wireless communications systems are the 800 MHz Radio Network, the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) Network, the Microwave Network, and the Paging Network. These systems are at the end of their service and maintenance lifecycle and must be replaced over the next several years to insure mission-critical wireless infrastructure remains reliable. The number one priority is the 800 MHz Radio Network voice system. The current dispatch consoles for this system run solely on 286 computers that are no longer manufactured or available.

In FY 2005, San Diego Fire-Rescue is taking the first step in transitioning off the Mobile Data Terminal Network through the migration from MDTs to the new Mobile Data Computers (MDC). This will insure continued reliable dispatching of the closest most appropriate emergency response unit to handle the emergency. This upgrade will also provide the platform required to leverage existing technology to insure timely critical information gets into the hands of the first responder including mapping, prefire plans and occupancy inspection information.

Total replacement of all four systems is estimated at \$150 million dollars. Given the failure to increase the Transient Occupancy Tax, and with no other funding source currently available, the Communications Division is conducting a needs assessment and cost analysis to prioritize these systems and components for replacement. Funding will be required for the critical upgrades and component replacements that need to be done to keep our current systems operational and reliable until the entire project can be funded. When applicable, grant funds are being utilized to upgrade and improve the microwave network and toward the MDT replacement program.

Moving to the San Diego County's Regional Communications Systems is not a City option at this time due to the lack of capacity for additional dispatch consoles, limitations on talk groups, and problems with radio coverage. National City took the last available

console connection. To utilize the RCS, the City of San Diego would have to use mobile radio control stations or portable radios for dispatching. These devices provide limited dispatch functionality and are not feasible for the City's 911 Public Safety Answering Points. Additional information will be provided once the analysis is complete.

## **FIRE & LIFEGUARD FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

In 2001, through a series of City Council and Council Committee meetings, in an effort to upgrade the public safety facilities, an overall program for improving fire and lifeguard facilities was presented with a corresponding financing plan. The original approved project program presented to Council included twelve (12) fire facilities, ten (10) lifeguard facilities, the Kearny Villa Repair Facility and major component replacements. The originally approved estimated total project budget was \$45.2 million, \$34.3 million for fire facilities and \$10.9 for lifeguard facilities.

Subsequent to the actions described above, issues arose which resulted in increased project costs including increased square footage requirements, relocation costs, construction cost escalation, additional costs for the Leadership in Energy Environmental Design (LEED) "Silver" certification, costs associated with compliance requirements for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and furniture, fixtures and equipment costs for the Lifeguard facilities.

Since the approved \$45.2 million Project budget was no longer sufficient to allow for completion of the full scope of the project, the City Council, on July 22, 2003, authorized an increase for the Fire facilities to \$47.3 million, and directed the City Manager to proceed with only the Lifeguard facilities that could be completed within the previously approved \$10.9 million budget. Three Lifeguard facilities were deferred including Old Mission Beach Lifeguard property acquisition, preliminary work for the Mission Bay Park Headquarters relocation, and the Ocean Beach Lifeguard Tower.

In order to address the increased costs for the construction of San Ysidro Fire Station 29 and the South Pacific Beach Lifeguard Tower, the City Council, in February 2004, authorized the City Manager to reallocate existing funds from the deferred lifeguard facilities and fire projects, which would not experience a schedule impact. With the February budget authorizations, the overall Project budget was increased from \$58,199,636 to \$60,280,493.

In addition, on March 29, 2004, the City Council authorized a budget increase to \$62,595,558 in order to award the construction of Lincoln Park Fire Station No. 12 and Del Cerro Fire Station No. 31. The balance required to fund these projects came from the reallocation of existing bond proceeds from other Fire and Life Safety projects.

On August 2, 2004, the City Council also authorized a \$130,000 budget decrease for the Project to \$62,465,558 in order to pay for temporary repairs at Hillcrest Fire Station No. 5.

A detailed report is currently being prepared to provide the full Council an update on the status of the project, the unfinished scope of the original project, and recommendations on completion of projects programmed within the original Phase 1 scope of work by June 30, 2005. Phase II will be delayed until the opportunity is available to once again enter the bond market. At that time the entire project will need to be re-evaluated based on current construction costs and new cost projections.

Currently, under the major components portion of this project, thirteen (13) fire station roofs have been replaced, eight (8) electrical upgrades were completed, apparatus doors at sixteen (16) fire stations were replaced as well as ten (10) HVAC systems and twenty-two (22) generators were replaced. The following three (3) fire stations and one (1) lifeguard tower are under construction:

- South Pacific Beach Lifeguard Tower – projected completion June 2005.
- San Ysidro, Station 29 – projected completion June 2005.
- Lincoln Park, Station 12 – projected completion August 2005.
- Del Cerro, Station 31 – projected completion August 2005.

Other projects currently on hold awaiting the opportunity to re-enter the bond market:

- Downtown, Station 1 – funding provided by CCDC to complete 100% design.
- Mission Valley, Station 2 – design is 90% complete and awaiting construction.
- Hillcrest, Station 5 – awaiting design build.
- Mid City, Station 17 – awaiting design build.
- Point Loma, Station 22 – design is fully funded with 5% design complete.
- Skyline, Future Station – land acquisition completed, on hold.
- Paradise Hills, Future Station – on hold.
- Kearny Villa Repair Facility – on hold.
- La Jolla Shores Tower – 80% design complete, on hold for construction.
- La Jolla Cove Tower – 60% design complete, on hold for construction.
- Children's Pool Tower – on hold.
- Mission Beach Tower – 30% design complete, on hold.
- South Mission Beach – concept design complete, on hold.
- North Pacific Beach Tower – concept design is complete, on hold.
- Lifeguard Headquarters – on hold, deferred.
- Ocean Beach Tower – on hold, deferred.
- Old Mission Beach – on hold, deferred.

Relocation of Kearny Villa Station 28 to Montgomery Field and relocation of Tierra Santa Fire Station 39 to allow expansion of the library were part of the original discussions and deferred due to limited funding.

## **DEFERRED MAINTENANCE**

The most serious deferred maintenance problems within the fire stations are being addressed through the \$4.2 million set aside for major components under the Fire &

Lifeguard Facilities Improvement Project. However, funds are limited to this total aggregate amount, and with the delay in the replacement of older fire stations and lifeguard towers, the deferred maintenance continues to escalate. Nine additional roofs with leaks in the recent storms had to be repaired. In addition, the Lifeguard Boat Dock is in serious condition and in need of immediate replacement. Total cost of deferred maintenance issues, including Lifeguard facilities, the boat dock and the Regional Public Safety Training facility, continue to be estimated at \$11 million due to the efforts made through the Fire & Lifeguard facilities project. With limited funds the Department will continue to address only the critical health and safety maintenance issues as they arise. Unfortunately, continuing to under-fund maintenance and repair, and only taking a “band aid” approach, as was noted in the February 14, 2004 Zero Based Management Review report, will ultimately lead to depreciation and deterioration of our existing public facilities requiring future replacement rather than minor repairs.

## **APPARATUS & VESSEL REPLACEMENT**

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends that front-line fire apparatus be limited to twelve years of service, and all apparatus be removed after twenty-four years of service. Eighteen months ago, when this issue was first raised at PS&NS, forty-one percent of SDFD’s front-line apparatus were over twelve years of service. Once the apparatus arrive that were authorized for purchase in the FY 2005 budget, only 22% of Fire-Rescue’s front-line emergency apparatus will be beyond the twelve-year recommended standard. In addition, due to these replacement efforts, only six percent of the emergency fleet is beyond the twenty-four year standard. The following efforts are underway to partially address apparatus and vessel needs:

- Engines – On November 19, 2004, three apparatus manufacturers responded to a Request for Proposal to enter into a seven-year lease agreement for fire engine replacement. Through this proposal, fifty (50) engines would be replaced over a seven-year cycle. Technical reviews have been completed and clarifications are being requested from the manufacturers at this time. The next phase is for all three apparatus manufacturers to provide a fire engine, according to their recommended specifications, for a six-month evaluation period. A final recommendation and vendor selection will be brought back to committee following this evaluation process.
- Ladder Trucks – Three 105’ Quint apparatus have been ordered, and one (1) tractor trailer has been submitted for bid. Three additional open cab aerial ladder apparatus are in need of immediate replacement and will be included in the FY 2006 budget requests.
- Open Cab Brush Engines – Four of the seven new brush engines have arrived and are currently undergoing acceptance testing and equipment outfitting prior to being placed into service. Three (3) additional brush engines have been ordered. Upon receipt and acceptance, the open cab safety issue identified in the Cedar Fire for brush engines will be resolved.

- Specialty Apparatus – Two (2) light and air units, one (1) hazardous materials response unit, and one (1) heavy rescue unit have been received and are undergoing outfitting of equipment prior to being placed into service. The Explosive Device Team apparatus is currently in need of replacement and will be included in the FY 2006 budget requests.
- Reserve Apparatus – Following the Cedar Fire, the decision was made to fully equip all of the Department's reserve apparatus to ensure they are ready to respond. The number of fully equipped reserve apparatus would increase from nine to fourteen. Out of the fourteen, eleven ready reserve apparatus are fully outfitted, equipped and ready to respond. Three additional units require emergency medical equipment to be fully outfitted at a cost of \$64,000.
- Vessels – One surf-rescue vessel and one fire-rescue vessel have been replaced for the Lifeguards along with a number of Personal Water Crafts (PWC), All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) and several inboard/outboard motors. The Lifeguard Services still require replacement of six additional surf-rescue vessels, three PWCs, two ATVs and motors. These will be included as part of the FY 2006 budget requests.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

Although San Diego Medical Services recently renewed the contract to provide emergency medical services, under the last three-year extensions eligible under the 1997 agreement, the contract must go out to bid to determine the next contract provider following this extension. This process will be under the oversight of this committee and the Request for Proposals should be developed and prepared for circulation by January 2007.

## **HELICOPTER PROGRAM**

Following the devastating wildfires in October 2003, the City and County of San Diego retained the nationally recognized aviation consulting firm of Conklin & de Decker to conduct a comprehensive study of an aircraft program that would best meet the needs of this region. Completed in January 2004, the consultant recommended that San Diego County acquire and operate at least three (3) medium class helicopters to meet the region's multi-mission requirements. In 2004, San Diego Fire-Rescue completed the first year of its year-round helicopter program under a contract with Kachina Aviation. In the FY 2005 budget, the City identified funding to establish a permanent, in-house fire-rescue helicopter program.

In August 2004, the City Council approved the issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the lease-purchase of one fire/rescue helicopter with an option to acquire a second. An RFP was issued in September of 2004 and two vendors submitted proposals.

San Diego Fire-Rescue spent considerable effort researching the most cost-effective approach to procuring and operating a fire/rescue helicopter for the City. Three procurement options were explored: one (1) new Bell 412EP, one (1) refurbished Bell 212HP, and two (2) refurbished Bell 212 HPs. Based upon the analysis, SDFD has determined that the procurement of one (1) refurbished Bell 212HP with an option to purchase a second helicopter is the City's most cost-efficient option. Helicopter operations will be headquartered at a new grant funded "helibase" at Montgomery Field. This recommendation will go before the full Council in early January 2005.

## **ACCREDITATION**

One of the major issues that fire, emergency medical, and lifeguard services has struggled with over the past decade is defining levels of service. It has been considered essential to determine whether a public service agency is prepared to provide a level of service commensurate with its responsibilities, risks, and adopted service level objectives. In the absence of such an analysis by the fire service, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) proposed a deployment standard that was successfully adopted as NFPA 1710 for fire and emergency medical response. However, this standard does not recognize local issues, conditions, service demands, or community needs, and is often seen as a one-size-fits all approach. Another option is pursuing Fire Service Accreditation, which is considered an acceptable equivalency to the NFPA 1710 standard. Fire Service Accreditation allows for analysis of critical historical data, existing and proposed deployment strategies, distribution and concentration of resources based on time parameters, identifying community risks and expectations, and collecting data on reliability of response to determine what an acceptable standard of coverage is for a particular community.

Over the past eighteen months, under the leadership of Chief Bowman, San Diego Fire-Rescue has been working to pursue Fire Service Accreditation. Fire Service Accreditation is a nationally recognized process to evaluate the department's overall performance. This evaluative process is a means to improve quality and performance, ensure community needs are met, and equip San Diego's leadership with the data to make informed service delivery decisions. Included in this process are risk assessment and the creation of a standard of response coverage. The documentation and analysis will be completed and compiled for submittal to the governing body for accreditation process, the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI), by February 2005. Final results and determinations will be concluded in April 2005, at which time a report will be prepared for review and discussion by PS&NS.

## **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

The terrorist attacks of September 2001 are unparalleled in United States history and focused national attention on the vital relationship between local public safety agencies and overall preparedness, security and safety of our country. The term "all-risk" is an indicator of the climate first responders face today. The need to prepare for the possibility and even the probability of dealing with various types of threats to public

safety is more apparent today than ever. This level of preparation requires equipment, training, personnel, and ultimately financial support. This inescapable fact was demonstrated when the firestorms of October 2003 burned 273,246 acres, claimed the lives of 14 civilians and one firefighter and destroyed 2,820 structures. The magnitude of these fires emphasized the unfortunate fact that the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department was not sufficiently staffed, equipped or trained to manage a large scale wildland/urban interface fire or any other significant “all-risk” event.

In FY 2005, through grant funds, donations, CDBG and CCDC funds SDFD began the first steps toward becoming more prepared. Today SDFD’s Department Operations Center has been relocated and better equipped to handle significant incidents. The first courses in Incident Command Systems (ICS) training have begun utilizing grant funds. Some outlay equipment such as radios, batteries, rope, hose, etc., has been purchased, and a number of apparatus have been replaced. However, a situation that took many years in the making will not be resolved in one budget cycle. Due to funding limitations, a phased approach has been taken in addressing our preparedness gap, and ongoing funding support will be required to bring the Department to an acceptable level to deal with significant incidents beyond the day-to-day operations of the Department.

## **FIRE PREVENTION**

Revisions to both the building codes and brush management requirements were presented before Council January 27, 2004. At that time, Council adopted a revision to the Building Code to require fire resistant roofing (Class “A” roofing) effective March 1, 2004, and directed the City Manager to take necessary actions to amend the brush management regulations of the San Diego Municipal Code to require a 100 foot defensible space between structures and native wildlands. At this time, the proposed regulatory revisions to brush management are going before full Council for adoption, as well as an amendment to the Municipal Code to allow for the use of goats as an additional method of performing brush management. Due to limited funding, a phased approach will be required to address the thinning of the brush fuel load. In conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department, SDFD will continue to pursue grant funds and federal assistance to assist in mitigation efforts.

Decades of unmanaged brush will not be mitigated in a single budget year. An analysis evaluating the risk hazard of the brush management situation has defined the scope of the brush/urban interface area as 900 linear miles. Of that, 23,000 acres are City-owned open space, which is managed by the Park and Recreation Department’s Open Space Division. Limited funds allow only for thinning approximately seventy (70) acres of brush fuel load per year. Both departments are in the process of prioritizing which areas require immediate mitigation and will determine what the most efficient method is based on slope and terrain of the identified areas. Recommendations will be made to make the highest, best use of the limited funds available.

Building Code changes to create more fire resistant structures are proposed to be brought back to Council later this year. Fire Prevention and Development Services staff has

worked with affected groups to reach a consensus on the proposed changes to the Building Code. These proposed changes will be presented to the Board of Appeals and Advisors in January 2005, the Land Use and Housing Committee in February 2005 and full Council in March 2005.

On October 3, 1994, the City Council adopted Ordinance O-18101 which amended Chapter V, Article 5, Division 8, of the San Diego Municipal Code by repealing Section 55.0889.0101 and amending Section 55.0101.0001 relating to the Uniform Fire Code life safety requirements for existing buildings other than high-rise. This was the repealing of Appendix 1A of the 1991 Edition of the Uniform Fire Code. It provided a reasonable degree of safety to persons occupying existing buildings by providing for alterations to such existing buildings which do not comply with the minimum requirements of the Uniform Building Code. Since the repealing of this Code section, the City of San Diego has experienced many devastating fires and the loss of lives in existing residential occupancies that would have been covered by this Code section. A more detailed report will be provided to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee recommending the adoption of Appendix 1A of the existing edition of the Uniform Fire Code. This recommendation would provide a degree of life safety that is needed in existing occupancies.

## **WELLNESS PROGRAM**

January 5, 2005, the doors of the San Diego Firefighters Regional Wellness Center opened at the San Diego Sports Medicine and Family Health Center. Through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fire Act grant and matching funds provided by the City of San Diego, a wellness program targeting improved firefighter fitness and decreased work-related injuries and illness is being implemented for the first time ever for San Diego Fire-Rescue uniformed personnel. This type of program has seen success in other cities across the nation.

The City of Phoenix Fire Department initiated a Wellness Program as a model for the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) in 1987. The results of their program have had a significant impact on the firefighters as well as the department. Injuries have been reduced by 26%, injury severity is down 42%, and reoccurrence of injury is down 75%. Other cities that have instituted Wellness Programs include Los Angeles County Fire Department, New York City Fire Department, Seattle Fire Department, Calgary Fire Department, Indianapolis Fire Department, and Miami Dade Fire Department.

Initially, the grant and matching funds will cover the first year of operating costs. Beyond this effort, additional grant funds, program expansion to other fire departments in the San Diego region and corporate sponsorship will be pursued to build a self-sustaining wellness program.

## **TRAINING**

During difficult budget times training is the first item to be scaled back and eventually eliminated within the budget as the focus shifts to the primary mission of providing operational resources. The problem SDFD currently faces is the issue of training in relation to succession planning. As the Department prepares for an exodus of more experienced officers it is critical that funding be identified to provide the training our new officers require. When the Department pursues grant funding for training courses it is accepted practice that the Department will provide the basic training courses of Incident Command/Management and the Homeland Security grant funds will build on this training to provide the education to respond to more advanced or unusual situations. A dedicated Training Facility and Training Program need to be institutionalized for San Diego Fire-Rescue personnel to ensure they are prepared to step in and manage the significant incidents of the future, whether they are brush fires, earthquakes or incidents involving weapons of mass destruction.

## **SUPPORT STAFF**

Support staff continues to be a problem for the administrative staff. Applying for and tracking grants are done with existing staff. As the Department is more and more successful at obtaining donations and grants, the Department is unable to manage the day-to-day work load and also administer all of the add on programs. In order to take full advantage of corporate donations and grants, a dedicated grant writer or corporate sponsorship individual is required to handle the donations as well as provide the recognition these individuals and corporations deserve. The Department will work to address this situation through the upcoming budget process.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Fire-Rescue Department looks forward to a continued collaborative approach to address the ongoing issues that help all of us improve preparedness, emergency response and recovery efforts for the citizens we serve. Further detailed reports will be provided as directed by the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeff Bowman  
Fire Chief

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P. Lamont Ewell  
City Manager

BOWMAN/TKJ